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Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops persicus* from Changaram Wetlands

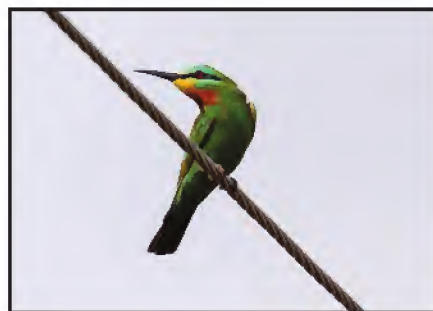
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Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is a vagrant or a rare passage migrant to south India and was first reported from Goa by Paul Holt (Holt 2009). During autumn, they migrate over the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan in north-west India to their wintering destinations in tropical Africa. They are believed to return across the Arabian sea during their spring migration and hence likely to turn up in the west coast of India.

Blue cheeked Bee-eaters [1] were spotted by the members of Birders Club, Ezhupunna including Mr. Sumesh., Mr. Renju, Mr. Abhi, and Mr. Arun during their regular evening birding sessions on 28 April 2014 at Changaram wetlands in Ezhupunna. Later on the photos has been taken by Dr. Manu, Sabu Kinattukara and self and identification confirmed as this species. At the time of writing, about twenty birds are still present and have stayed put for a week now. This is the second record of this species from Kerala – the earlier one being a single from Kole Wetlands on 29 April 2013; i.e. almost the same date as ours last year. (Sreenivasan 2013). Hence, birding during late April/early May in our coasts is likely to produce more sightings of this species during their spring migration.

This finding may call great attention to Changaram wetlands as it is becoming the stepping stone for many rare migratory birds. Many eminent birdwatchers and ornithologists had suggested this place to be a perfect habitat for migratory birds. A month back Spot billed Pelicans, Spotted Redshanks and Common Ringed Plovers were also reported from the same place. It is necessary that the Kerala Forest Department initiate proper conservational measures and raise local awareness about the importance of Changaram wetlands.



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

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